

## NISC STAFF UPDATES

### to the Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC)

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**Assistant Director for International and Regional Affairs**

- Arctic Council Invasive Species activities:
  - The Arctic Council is a high level intergovernmental forum for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
  - Arctic Council Member States include Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and The United States of America (US) and six Permanent Participants that represent indigenous groups in the Arctic.
  - The US is currently Chair of the Arctic Council (2015 – 2017). During our Chairmanship, the US will focus on three priority issues:
    - Arctic Ocean Safety, Security and Stewardship.
    - Improving economic and living conditions.
    - Reducing the impacts of climate change and improving resilience
      - The prevention and management of invasive species is a central component of this climate resilience priority.
  - The expected dramatic increase in energy exploration and other development in the Arctic combined with the other impacts of climate change will cause an equally dramatic increase in the number of opportunities for invasive species (marine, freshwater and terrestrial) to be introduced (propagule pressure).
  - To proactively address this increase in propagule pressure and advance the US priority of climate resilience, the US has partnered with Norway to propose an invasive species initiative under the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) working group. The proposal will concentrate on identifying and developing best management practices to address key pathways and vectors of invasive species movement into and around the Arctic.
  - NISC staff and the US Department of State are co-leading the interdepartmental/interagency team working on this effort and are also the two US representatives to the CAFF international group of experts working on fully developing this initiative.
- National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW)
  - NISC is coordinating the NISAW 2016 Steering Committee, made up of various interested Federal, state, local, NGO and other participants.
  - The NISAW 2016 Steering Committee is considering various options for 2016.
- ISAC recommendation update: “Recognizing the value of the Invasive Species Working Group established recently under the United States-New Zealand Joint Commission on Science and Technology Collaboration, ISAC recommends that NISC Agencies pursue and support similar opportunities under other existing bilateral and multi-lateral science and technology collaboration agreements for research cooperation on priority invasive species issues of common interest.”

- U.S. hosted a meeting of the US/NZ JCM Working Group in May, 2015 that was attended by several NZ scientists and 15+ representatives from multiple US Departments and agencies. The two day meeting focused on three areas in the current work plan.
  - Invasive terrestrial vertebrate prevention and management. (Toxicant efficiency, low-density detection and biosecurity).
  - Plant pest control and prevention (border biosecurity, detection, stinkbugs)
  - Pacific Island outreach and coordination (tapping expertise and sharing of technologies/methodologies, invasive ants and biocontrol).
- Several JCM ISWG phone call meetings have been held as well.
- Next in-person meetings being planned for early and mid- 2016 on margins of other meetings.
- Have received tentative interest from Australia regarding an allied effort
  - Many other potential partners through JCM process including France, the UK, and Arctic Council Nations.

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**Program Analyst and ISAC Coordinator**

**ISAC Nominations for Class 9:** The open nomination period for new ISAC members was announced in the Federal Register on September 30, 2015. The deadline for submitting nominations is November 30, 2015.

**ISAC Statistics:** With ISAC in existence for 15 years, below is a synopsis of ISAC activities since its creation in 1999:

- 8 Charter Renewals (2001, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014)
  - Charter modification or revisions in 2005, 2006 and 2008)
- 21 meetings – 19 F2F (face-to-face); 3 teleconference (Biofuels, Incentives, and EDRR)
- 165 formal recommendations to NISC as of May 2015
- 9 white papers
- 109 current and former members

Non-Governmental Organizations	22
State Government	23
Local Government	3
Tribal Government	5
Academia	28
Industry	23
International	2
Other (Consultants, etc.)	3
TOTAL	109

- 84 reappointed to a second term
- 4 received new appointment after sitting out for one nomination cycle

**NISC Website:** Completion of the NISC website to the Drupal content management platform under [www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov) was completed in August 2015. NISC still maintains the old URL, [www.invasivespecies.gov](http://www.invasivespecies.gov), which now now redirects users to the new subsite under [doi.gov](http://doi.gov), [www.doi.gov/invasivespecies](http://www.doi.gov/invasivespecies). NISC staff (Kelsey and Jamie) will be working on the development and implementation of a site plan. This priority task will begin after this ISAC meeting.

**Stas Burgiel**

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**Assistant Director for Prevention and Budgetary Coordination**

**Federal Lands and the Movement of Aquatic Invasive Species:** In August 2015, an ANSTF/NISC task force released the paper “Federal Policy Options: Addressing the Movement of Aquatic Invasive Species Onto and Off of Federal Lands and Waters.” The report includes an overview of current federal authorities including a summary review of agency actions relevant to managing the movement of AIS along with the laws and policies underpinning that summary. It also identifies a number of policy options for continued work. This information has also been forwarded to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for reference in the development of a report on federal authorities on aquatic invasive species required by the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014.

**National Early Detection and Rapid Response Framework:** see presentation and Department of the Interior update by Hilary Smith. Additional activities include outreach to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency and ANSTF panels (Western Regional Panel and the Gulf and South Atlantic States Regional Panel).

**NISC Interagency Crosscut Budget:** At the end of May, NISC released its annual Interagency Crosscut Budget which tallies federal agencies expenditures on invasive species activities across 6 general categories: prevention, early detection and rapid response, control and management, restoration, research, education and public education awareness, and leadership and international cooperation. The crosscut includes figures for FY2103 and FY2014 (actual expenses), FY2015 (enacted budget) and FY2016 (President's proposed budget). Timing of the Crosscut's release was expedited per the explanatory guidance provided with the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015. This information was also communicated to the Government Accountability Office for its inquiry into federal spending on aquatic invasive species.

**Economics and Invasive Species:** Recognizing the importance of economic evaluations and cost-benefit analyses to support resource decision-making NISC has provided input into a number of initiatives in those areas. This includes: support for work by the U.S. Geological Survey to develop a decision-support tool for the control of buffelgrass under future climate scenarios; input into a pilot DOI climate adaptation analysis for the Southeast looking at the costs of action vs. no action for federal lands; and input to the ANSTF on identifying priority needs for economic analysis and aquatic invasive species.

**Free Trade Agreements:** Negotiations on the TransPacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement for Pacific Rim countries was recently completed. Discussions on the environment chapter of the TransAtlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the European Union are starting to get more substantive (note: the EU's position paper from January 2015 includes reference to a substantive provision on invasive alien species). NISC staff continue to engage in these discussions.

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**Deputy Director**

**Status of NISC Management Plan:** Since the last ISAC meeting, my main projects have been incorporating the comments that we have received on the Plan into one document and working with the EDRR Framework. You will hear a more detailed account of the EDRR Framework from others. The future vision for the Plan will be discussed by others as well. So, I will focus my comments on my work to get the draft Plan to its current state.

We received over 850 comments from the full range of NISC members' agencies and bureaus and ISAC members. I greatly appreciate your and their efforts with this important document. Comments ranged from relatively easily accomplished corrections and edits to more encompassing comments. In response to editorial comments, structural changes were made to make the document more readable and the tables more useful. All comments received have been incorporated or otherwise noted in the current draft. That draft is now before NISC leadership for their review.

Some comments challenged long-held NISC focus areas. For example, NISC's work on prevention has mostly been focused upon preventing the introduction of invasive species propagules to additional areas. The primary approach has been pathway interdiction. At smaller scales, NISC has worked to reduce propagule pressure in pathways that spread invasive propagules among areas within the US. However, one reviewer pointed out that the eradication of source populations is as effective of a prevention strategy as pathway interdiction, if not more so. It is my understanding that this is a key component of certain "Safe-guarding" and other efforts, but it was not called out specifically as a strategy in the draft Plan. Reviewers also indicated that prevention could take the form of increased resilience or decreased invisibility of receiving ecosystems. Promoting native biodiversity in both natural and agricultural ecosystems could both a strategy within prevention.

Currently, the Plan has Goal areas that are consistent with those of past plans. Strategic goals, like Prevention, EDRR, and Control, have been retained in this draft. However, reviewers indicated that these are more strategies than goals. They suggested that goals such as increasing biological diversity, increasing ecosystem resilience, and increasing ecosystem services be stated as goals of the Plan, and Prevention, EDRR, and Control for example be strategies within goals.

Some reviewers asked about why certain "species specific" objectives (e.g., feral swine and Asian Carp) were included in the Plan. They suggested that the plan should promote actions to address the damage from feral horses as well – if it was going to go to that level of specificity. They asked what criteria was used to determine what species-specific objectives were included.

Several capabilities and capacities were identified "themes" that underlie multiple actions with the Plan. For example, the need for systematics capabilities and capacities to provide authoritative identifications of biological specimens and other biological and ecological information is mentioned specifically in one section of the current draft. However, systematics underlies actions throughout the Plan.

A challenge is how to both specifically mention capability and capacity building objectives directed at broad themes in one section, and also reflect that they underlie a range of other actions. Other themes like this were: risk assessment, and the need to differentiate between capacity and capability, funding, personnel needs, and the ability to work with non-federal partners.

Several commenters had concerns about the length and complexity of elements in the Plan and urged a simplification and shorter-time frames to accomplish objectives.

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**Executive Director**

I'd like to highlight one activity that I hadn't planned to discuss during my other presentations.

The World Conservation Congress is hosted by IUCN approximately every four years. It brings together thousands of leaders from government, civil society, indigenous peoples, business, and academia, with the goal of conserving the environment and harnessing the solutions nature offers to global challenges. Ultimately, it is intended to improve our capacities to manage our natural environment for human, social and economic development through innovative, partnership-based problem solving.

The next Congress will be held in Hawai'i on September 1<sup>st</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Invasive alien species have been proposed as one of the major focal areas for the meeting, known as journeys. As you are aware, this issue is a priority for the host state.

The deadline for proposal submissions closed on October 15<sup>th</sup>. NISC staff were involved in the development of three proposals.

- On behalf of the Department of the Interior, I submitted a proposal for a training course entitled, "Institutionalizing Invasive Alien Species Programmes: Best Practices for Communication and Governance. Institutionalization is one of the meeting themes. Partners for this proposal include the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, US Department of State, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, UNEP Asia Pacific Regional Office, UNEP Pacific Subregional Office, the Council of Europe, CABI, Conservation International, Island Conservation, and the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council. Assuming the proposal is accepted, we will be developing a guidebook on institutionalizing invasive alien species programs as a complement to the training course. The Council of Europe has offered to fund this product.
- Phil also worked with our colleagues in the Pacific Invasives Partnership (PIP) has to develop two additional proposals. These include:
  - A workshop to highlight the invasive species activities underway in the Pacific, with an emphasis on biosecurity, eradication, and the importance of partnership-based initiatives.
  - An training course that will introduce a wide range of cross-cutting invasive species issues of particular importance in the Pacific Islands. The inter-relationships between invasive species and climate resilience is one example.

- Finally, we were asked to partner with the Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) on a training course that will be focus on selected aspects invasive species management and to collaborate with Island Conservation and other partners on a workshop introducing advances in genetic technology to advance endangered species conservation and invasive species management.

We anticipate receiving feedback on the proposals by the end of January. If you are particularly interested in the World Conservation Congress, please join the presentations and discussions to take place during the prevention subcommittee meetings.